


 Two men with prominent mustaches are smiling and holding promotional products. They are wearing white polo shirts. The man on the left is holding a green bottle of Victoria Bitter with a cartoon character on top. The man on the right is holding a similar bottle with a different cartoon character. The background is a wall with framed photos.

A LASTING REMINDER

Promotional products have come to the fore in recent years as organisations search for ways to cut through to the market and establish their brands, writes **Sam McConnell**.

Promotional products have long suffered from a perception that they're an 'end of budget' spend. Marketing managers would run their major campaigns, pumping money into TV, radio, out of home or direct marketing; then, almost as an afterthought, use that last five percent of budget to brand some t-shirts or tennis balls and that was that. During the past five years, however, attitudes towards promotional products have changed considerably. In 2007, it's not about finding some bits and pieces to chuck your logo on and hand out to clients and staff – promotional products are now perceived as a critical part of the marketing mix, and a tool that can play a major role in marketing campaigns.

"A well-chosen or well-developed promotional product can offer a multi-sensory experience that will enhance the value of any company," says Michael Hanrahan, marketing director at Accure. "In this overcrowded commercial landscape, a brand has to go beyond a 30-second ad to create long-lasting connections. Effective promotional products can offer that point of true engagement."

William Kestin, CEO of APPA (Australasian Promotional Products Association) and vice president of IFPPA (International Federation of Promotional Products Associations), agrees, arguing that promotional products are tangible and measurable and if properly utilised in the marketing mix, are a creative and interactive alternative to above the line advertising. "They can enforce and even reinvent a brand's image and can engage target markets for a longer period of time than most other forms of advertisement," he says.

Use of promotional products to impact 'brand image' is now widespread, with many organisations using them as part of greater branding campaigns. Dorry Kordahi, managing director at DKM, has made brand-building using promotional products a key part of his company's offering. "We view promotional objects as brand platforms; they carry your brand out to the market and continue to present your brand to your audience day after day, week after week," he says. "The idea of using promotional products as brand platforms is critical as the brand takes on the attributes of the item to which it's attached. This is because brands are all about perception. If a brand is placed onto an object that exudes all the values so carefully invested into that brand, then the object will extend its value, re-enforcing its perception in the market."

Kordahi also believes that suppliers are becoming more creative and innovative and delivering a wider range of products and that, in return, marketers are becoming more aware that a great promotional product can drive their campaigns further.

It's all part of the industry's resurgence, highlighted by stunning growth of over 35 percent in the past five years. "More players have entered the industry in recent times, which has had both positive and negative results," says Kestin. "The positive side is an injection of new creativity in our industry. The negative side is that growth brings a lack of general knowledge about the many pitfalls of producing successful promotional products campaigns."

This 'new creativity' has come about in part through the adoption of new technology in promotional product campaigns – and it's having a

significant impact on the way people think about promotional products. “Technology has played a major role in the changes witnessed in our industry,” Kestin adds. “Online focus groups are helping promotional product companies develop consumer-driven campaigns. Also, technology-based purchasing and logistical tracking systems allow marketers to measure results and track spending. The new products that plug into today’s technology are engaging consumers like never before. The ‘Boonie’ figurine, which uses digital transmission technology to deliver sound bites to consumers is a great example.”

Kestin cites the UV registration technology used in the Suncorp Sunwatch that warns wearers when they have overexposed themselves to the sun, and the digital technology used in electronic skipping ropes used to promote the New Zealand Heart Foundation’s fundraising efforts as great examples of technologically savvy promotional products.

Michael Hanrahan, marketing director at Accure (which produced the ‘Boonie’ Doll), agrees, saying that technology has had and is continuing to have a big impact on the industry. “It’s now a lot more complex than a branded pen and t-shirt business,” he says. “Technology and the internet have opened up the avenues of communication and turned the tables on the what, when and where of consumer engagement. Brand messages will be absorbed by people at different times, places and on different levels of complexity – the new generation of promotional products needs to understand the importance of customised messaging and deliver them at the appropriate times to each consumer, wherever that might be.”

In previous years, the industry has also suffered from a lack of professionalism from a small number of players. Because of the product volumes

PROMOTIONAL PRODUCTS: HOW TO CHOOSE

Select promotional products that:

- ◆ fit with and reinforce your brand attributes
- ◆ appeal to your target market
- ◆ have a high perceived value
- ◆ support usage of your brand
- ◆ reinforce your promotional theme, and
- ◆ have lasting value to your brand.

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CASE STUDY 1 NRL PROMOTION - SIMPLY PROMOTIONS

When StayinFront, a global provider of enterprise-wide customer relationship management (CRM) solutions, recently won a major CRM contract with the National Rugby League, it decided on a novel way to promote the win. StayinFront and Simply Promotions worked together to source a miniature rugby ball. These were ideal for the StayinFront promotion since they were clearly not a toy, but a quality item that would have a high perceived value with customers. The balls created a strong link between StayinFront and the NRL, being exact miniatures of the balls used in professional rugby league and made with the same materials and processes.

The branded rugby balls will be sent to key customers and prospects with a letter announcing the company’s success at landing the NRL contract in competition with 15 other suppliers. This promotion to customers will be timed to coincide with media coverage of the win, highlighting StayinFront’s success, and also the versatility of Simply Promotions solutions.



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How a plastic doll became a marketing action man

The promotion of B Bonanza, the Summer of the Battle of the Tas, offers an opportunity for owners of their own piece of David Boon and Ian Booy to have the interactive Talking “Beefy” figurines.

David Boon resonated strongly with drinkers as a great sportsman and Aussie bloke who likes a drink and laugh with his mates! The campaign will recapture the halcyon days of cricket





CASE STUDY 2 NATIONAL FOODS PROMOTION - ARID ZONE

THE BRIEF

National Foods was keen to increase sales revenues over summer 2005. This is the busiest period for Big M sales. The company wanted to run a competition and was looking for an inspirational branded premium that would appeal to its target market of men aged 24 to 30 years. At that

time Big M had a market share of 80 percent. National Foods wanted to increase its share of the pie. The intention was to attract 250,000 entries and give away 600 prize kits. The challenge was to select a premium that had high value to the market yet could be purchased at a low unit cost.

THE EXECUTION

Arid Zone conducted a series of focus groups with the target market. Five potential products were shown to participants and a series of pre-selected questions were asked about each product. Each product was selected for its appeal to the target market according to National Foods' brief. The Skim Board was selected as the preferred premium. Arid Zone was able to leverage this popularity to create a very appealing premium appropriately branded with the Big M logo.

THE RESULT

The promotion was run between January and March 2005. Boards were prominently displayed at point of sale in petrol stations and convenience stores throughout Australia. Arid Zone assisted in the set-up for key Victorian locations. Details of the promotion were also displayed on Big M cartons. The objective for the Skim Board promotion was to provide an innovative summer-themed premium, which would generate excitement, connect with brand values and drive sales through the summer period. The campaign generated great excitement. All Skim Boards were moved with requests for additional units made by customers and suppliers. The campaign also increased sales for the Big M brand and market share in Big M's target audience.

involved, poor quality products can reach a large number of people and taint the whole industry; despite the fact most suppliers produce quality work. Gloria Stanbury, director and senior account manager at Simply Promotions, argues that using suppliers working with no infrastructure behind them and without APPA membership is a big mistake. "We have often been told stories of print that washes off bottles etc. and the customer has no recourse," she says. "Our clients see the value in having consultants

that can not only advise them on the most suitable products, but also introduce innovative ideas with existing or brand new merchandise, and guarantee the workmanship suitability for the purpose. When you always take the cheapest you always get the cheapest in product value and service. This has not reflected well on the industry. Also, too often promotional products are an afterthought, meaning there are very short lead times, giving no room for adjustment or deliberation on your decision."

These thoughts are echoed by William Kestin. As CEO of APPA, Kestin is sometimes on the receiving end of unhappy clients who have not used APPA members and been disappointed for a variety of reasons. "The biggest mistake people make is not utilising the experience and creativity of the promotional products company in the marketing mix. Marketers let their ego get in the way and feel their ideas are the best. Promotional product companies do thousands of product campaigns a year and their knowledge is sadly underutilised. The result is the marketer blames the concept of promotional products as the problem, when sometimes it is just the wrong product rolled out in the wrong way.



CASE STUDY 3 HOLIDAY INN PROMOTION - DKM

When Holiday Inn went looking for some promotional items, it didn't expect to come away with a whole new positioning campaign. But that's exactly what it got. Holiday Inn was looking for ideas. Its goal was to relaunch its conferencing facilities. On one hand it needed conference merchandise, but more importantly it needed a concept to tie all its marketing activities together.

Searching for merchandise, Holiday Inn approached DKM. Explaining its objectives, Holiday Inn set DKM a challenge to come up with not just some merchandise ideas, but an entire concept.

The solution was the 'Keeping It Clear' campaign. 'Keeping It Clear' embodied easy availability, time out, cleanliness and accessibility. When visiting a Holiday Inn, you are now greeted with a range of clear, customised products all re-enforcing the concept. The range carries the Holiday Inn brand and projects the 'Keeping it Clear' message. Keeping It Clear is now being rolled out to Holiday Inns across the region.


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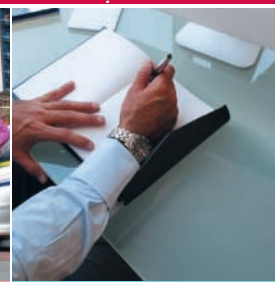
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“The second biggest mistake is the obsession with the cheapest price when buying promotional products. More than two-thirds of people recently surveyed said they would risk going with an untried and unethical promotional product company strictly based on cheaper prices. These jobs invariably backfire, costing the client more than they could ever have saved. Not all products that look alike are alike. Copies of quality products could be cheaper because they are:

- ❖ missing ink in the cartridge of the pen, causing the pens to dry up after a few uses
- ❖ made with un-reinforced seams causing shirts to tear after one wear (or cheap materials that will run or shrink)
- ❖ products fitted with inferior batteries causing the electronics to fail, or
- ❖ products that infringe patents, potentially causing legal issues or a recall on the entire order.

“The best protection is to deal with an APPA member to ensure you are dealing with an ethical and established company. If you are being supplied at a price that is ‘too good to be true’... it probably is. That is why 90 percent of the complaints that APPA receives result from jobs done through a non-APPA member,” adds Kestin.

Once you’ve decided on a suitably qualified APPA member and developed a reasonable idea of what you are going to spend, developing a strong relationship with your supplier is the key to getting the most from your campaign. “Building a good relationship with your promotional company will pay dividends with saving in time and money,” says Gloria Stanbury. “Once they have a clear understanding of your company goals, culture and image, you have a consultant ready to support your creative team and ensure success in your campaigns and events, whether they be internal or nationwide. You will find that your scope is greatly widened and you have more choice on all levels.” **M**

WHAT ARE THREE KEY THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN PLANNING A PROMOTIONAL PRODUCTS CAMPAIGN?

WILLIAM KESTIN, CEO, APPA

- ❖ Verify on www.appa.com.au that your promotional product provider is an APPA member. Some companies claim to be an APPA member and they are not. Check it for yourself and remember, if you have a dispute with a non-APPA member we are powerless to intervene on your behalf.
- ❖ Give your promotional product company plenty of time to add ideas and creativity into your marketing mix. Meet with them and allow them to give the ‘product perspective’ to upcoming events, product launches and marketing initiatives.
- ❖ Don’t be fooled by inexperienced and unethical companies making offers that are too good to be true. Cheaper isn’t always better. Get guarantees in writing, build a relationship with the promotional product company and you’ll save far more in the long run.

CLIVE MCCORKELL, CO-DIRECTOR, ARID ZONE

- ❖ Define your target market and the message/result you are attempting to achieve.
- ❖ Have a clear budget in mind.
- ❖ Allow sufficient lead time to create the most targeted, unique and cost-effective products.

GLORIA STANBURY, DIRECTOR AND SENIOR ACCOUNT MANAGER, SIMPLY PROMOTIONS

- ❖ Have a clear objective plan with the results you wish to achieve in the campaign. Use your chosen promotional product consultant to work through the objectives and identify the recipient’s expectations and reactions to the promotional gift.
- ❖ Identify the budget you have and ensure that you have advice on all the expenditure concerned with branding etc.
- ❖ Ensure you have started planning so you can get the right product/merchandise in time with the right branding.

MICHAEL HANRAHAN, MARKETING DIRECTOR, ACCURE

- ❖ Clients need to engage people in meaningful conversations. Trying to sweep through a marketplace with a broad brush doesn’t have the same effect it used to. Spend more time conversing with those who

are listening and less time on those who aren’t; you’ll find those not listening may just come around.

- ❖ Too many brands, too many choices, not enough time. Leaving an impression of the brand now means more than a two-colour pad-printed logo. If you truly want to talk with people, provide experiences that will alter perceptions and allow interaction – it’s an eight-way street! This means creating touch points in different consumer environments, on different levels and driving the promotional products and campaign ‘through-the-line’.
- ❖ Impact value doesn’t always mean ‘expensive’. Trusted products delivered in the right context or in stages to build a crescendo can be very effective. Creativity and brilliance is all about moulding raw ideas with imaginative delivery.

DORRY KORDAHI, MANAGING DIRECTOR, DKM

The three key things are: brand, brand and brand. Other than that, there are some incidentals such as:

- ❖ Integration: plan the role of your brand platform within the main body of your campaign. If you ‘tack’ something onto the end of your campaign you run the risk of ending up with an ordinary, low-cost item that doesn’t really enhance your core objectives.
- ❖ Timing: to give yourself the most options allow yourself plenty of time. Perhaps the perfect product has to be sourced from overseas?
- ❖ Budget: understand that a promotional product persists in the market long after your campaign is finished. Make sure you don’t set up a legacy of your brand on thousands of cheap items floating around the market for years to come.

JOANNE KINSEY, SALES MANAGER, MCLEAN CORPORATE PROMOTIONS

- ❖ Plan ahead: this allows clients to source items from around the world if the quantities and time-frames are suitable, which saves money.
- ❖ Budget: so often I get contacted to quote on pens. There are hundreds of pens to choose from, ranging literally from 20 cents to \$450! If the client has an idea of what they want to spend, it helps us get to the end result a lot more quickly.
- ❖ Know your target audience: there’s no point giving away a branded corporate desk item to a bunch of guys who work in a factory.

In the Old West you avoided the Indians, when buying promotional products today it's the Cowboys.

90% of complaints received by APPA are from companies who have purchased promotional products from a NON-APPA member.

We are powerless to intervene on your behalf if you take that risk!

Protect yourself, APPA can only assist in dispute resolution if the promotional provider you deal with is an APPA member!

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is an APPA member log onto
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and search by state or region)**

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